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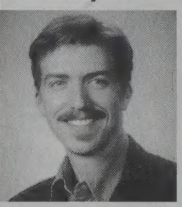
United Church Board for World Ministries Winter 1998, Vol. XXVII, No. 3

Eight appointed at November meet

Eight persons, one new and seven returnees, were appointed for service at the November meeting of the Common Global Ministries Board held in Glorieta, New Mexico. They will be serving in Guatemala, Brazil, Fiji, Thailand and Turkey.



Garry G. Sparks, a Global Mission Intern, began serving two years as a pastoral worker with Christian Action of Guatemala, a CGMB partner, on Jan. 1. He plans to accompany refugees and work on sustainable development, potable water and other projects.

Garry said at his church, Midway Hills Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Dallas, TX, there was "constant talk of justice" which prepared him for overseas service. He developed an interest in working for human rights during college, holds a master's degree in Latin American studies, and is interested in the dialogue between Protestants and Catholics, as well as the traditional absence of the Mayan voice.

Barbara de Souza, who serves the Women's Health Education Program at the Institute of Religious Studies, returns for another term March 1 as an advisor in the areas of health and sexuality. Using a health manual she had published in 1996, Barbara helps empower shantytown women in Rio de Janeiro to become health educators who then serve their communities as nursing assistants, family planners, organizers of free health clinics, etc.

Responding to a question about street children (500,000 in Brazil), she said, "If we empower women's lives with self-esteem, that will change children's lives. A street child is a political issue. The economic macho system in Brazil can only be changed if women change." Barbara is a member of the First Congregational Church, UCC, River Falls, WI.

Jack and Lydia Johnson-Hill, after serving the last four years in South Africa, returned Jan. 1 to Fiji, where they had served from 1988-94. Jack is a professor of theology and Lydia is a lecturer in ministry, both at Pacific Theological

(Continued on page 3)

Missionary quiz

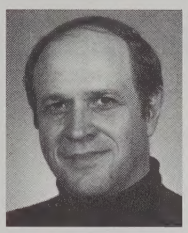
The children of this missionary couple — and some of their grandchildren — know all about washing clothes in buckets, using waste water for thirsty plants, and how delicious warm, fresh bread from the Taj Mahal Bakery is with a generous serving of Grandma's homemade lemon marmalade.

She often uses cartoons she draws herself as part of her approach to teaching English, and loves to teach children how to sew rag dolls. He is clever with his hands. If he ever decided to work in the secular world, he could impress any publisher with his working knowledge of antiquated printing equipment.

They entered the country of their last assignment in a troop carrier in the middle of a war. Now they have worked themselves out of a job and are planning to spend the remaining years of their career at a desert site in South Africa.

Who are they? Answers on p. 9.

Bishop to head program unit



Dr. Dale L. Bishop was called to the position of Acting General Secretary for Mission Program by the Common Global Ministries Board at its November meeting in Glorieta, New Mexico. This affirmed action taken earlier that week by the United Church Board for World Ministries Board of Directors.

Bishop will continue serving concurrently as CGMB's Middle East Area executive, a position he has held since 1980. The new appointment runs through Dec. 21, 1998. He replaces Daniel F. Romero, who resigned last fall to become the Southern California Conference Minister.

The CGMB formally adopted three strategic directions to guide the work of Global Ministries. They are nurturing human community, restoring the environment and economics to the service of God, and faith development.

In other CGMB business, retiring missionaries Allan and Joan Eubank were presented with tokens of appreciation by the Disciples' Division of Overseas Ministries President Patricia Tucker Spier for their 36 years of service in Thailand. Bishop presented Betty and Ken Frank with medallions in appreciation for their 25 years of service in Zambia and Turkey.

Missionaries voted emeritus status included Carol Garn, Turkey; and Norma Gilg, James Landes and John Rasche, all Japan.

Meeting just before the CGMB, the UCBWM Board adopted a social screen on investments in corporations that develop or produce anti-personnel landmines.

The UCBWM also elected Barbara Kershner Daniel chairperson and Rodney Franklin vice chairperson. Daniel also chairs the Common Global Ministries Board.

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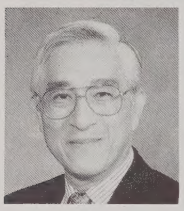
Message from the EVP



Disestablishment and renewal

By David Hirano

When I was the Connecticut Conference Minister, I could not help but be aware that the Congregationalists established Connecticut and founded its cities and towns. Some of the churches dated their beginnings from their origins in England. As a consequence, on almost every village green there is a church whose name more than likely is "First Church of Christ of ...."

". . .once the center of power..."

The church was the center of the town, then came the schools, then the town government. To this day, the Connecticut Conference archives are consulted when there are disputes about land ownership. The church was once the center of power and influence in New England.

Now, however, the largest Christian presence there is the Roman Catholic Church. The United Church of Christ is second, and the Episcopal Church third. Yale University, founded as a seminary to train Congregational ministers, has become so secularized it hardly recognizes that origin. While the Connecticut Conference still manages to have some influence, it does not come close to that which businesses and corporations have. Even when the Catholics, the UCCs and the Episcopalians have gotten together, the power of business and corporations has been greater.

Consumerism/materialism has become the religion of the United States. Churches feel they must market themselves, as people "shop around" for a place to worship. Yet there is an emptiness of spirit that people want filled.

That the church no longer has the influence it once had, that Christianity in the United States is now disestablished, is not news. We have lost our influential grip, and no matter how we try we will not get Sunday mornings back. We will continue competing with soccer and store sales and other events on our holy day.

It is when we begin to think of ourselves as a minority in the United States of America that we may begin to make a real difference in the world. We will then, perhaps, truly learn to put our trust in God, and under God's guidance and power we will work on issues like poverty, hunger, human rights and what it really means to be a child of God. When we are self-consciously a minority, perhaps we will be more visionary, and willing to risk, and not give up in our quest for justice.

". . .a new appreciation for our partnership with. . .Christians . . .who are small minorities."

When we realize that we are disestablished, with little power of our own, and depending on the power of God, we will gain a new appreciation for our partnership with the many Christians around the world who are small minorities. Then, perhaps, we can learn anew what it is to be faithful as we join with these sisters and brothers who serve God with persistence, and with love, and who give themselves untiringly to the ministries of Jesus Christ.

Child born in Germany

David Georg Christoph Smith was born December 22, 1997, to Global Ministries mission personnel Lisa and Steven Smith. The Smiths, who both do parish work and facilitate ecumenical relationships, are on a three-year appointment with the Evangelical Church of the Union based in Frankfurt/Oder, Germany, on the border with Poland. David is their first child.

Bulgarian serving

When communist governments collapsed in 1989, churches all across eastern Europe realized some relief from the restrictions and persecutions of the communist era. But the Union of Evangelical Congregational Churches in Bulgaria (a Global Ministries partner since its founding by U.S. Congregational missionaries in 1858) still faced enormous obstacles. Among its six remaining pastors, not one had theological training — and the church had no resources to provide education to prepare leaders for the new situation.

An intervention in 1992 by some Reformed Church members in Europe who had a special interest in promoting theological education in Bulgaria, along with some support from Global Ministries, has now borne fruit.

Daniel Ignatov, a young Bulgarian Congregationalist, has completed five years of study and received a Master of Theology degree from the Protestant Theological Faculty in Vaux-sur-Seine, France. His education there was prompted by several Reformed congregations in France and Switzerland. To prepare for relating to the Bulgarian Orthodox Church (the overwhelming majority in that country) Daniel also, during his last year, studied at the St. Sergius Institute for Orthodox Theology in Paris.

Reformed Church members formed an Association for the Support of Daniel Ignatov, and succeeded in raising sufficient funds to send him to France. They also sought and received financial support from Global Ministries, as the representative of the "mother church" of the Bulgarian Congregational Union. The Global Ministries' Overseas Leadership Development Fund responded with small grants for the final two years of Daniel's study.

Last September Daniel returned to Bulgaria to begin service as pastor of a congregation in the city of Plovdiv, although it is widely expected that he will also have ample opportunity to contribute to the church's work at the national level. That same month, the Association for the Support of Daniel Ignatov convened in a Reformed church in a village in southern France for its final meeting, and voted itself out of existence.

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Around the Region: Europe

The stranger; the challenge

By Alfred Jones, Global Ministries Volunteer in France

Note: In recent years Western European and North American societies have been experiencing many similar problems and social attitudes. As a result our partnerships with European churches on specific issues have assumed relevance which gives new impetus to the value of partnership; sharing experiences and perspectives becomes more mutually instructive and supportive. Suspicion and hostility against immigrants and foreigners is a significant and current case in point. The following report by Alfred Jones, a mission interpreter with the Stewardship Council serving in Paris, describes how the Reformed Church of France is pursuing the issue of xenophobia, and invites us to consider the challenge it presents to Christians. — Kenneth R. Ziebell, Global Ministries Europe Executive

During the 1960s and 1970s, Europe's economies boomed. How did it happen? To do much of the hard manual labor that accomplished the economic miracle, Western European countries welcomed tens of thousands of foreigners as "guest workers." South Asians in the United Kingdom. Turks in Germany. And North Africans (usually referred to as "Algerians," regardless of where they came from) in France.

". . .homes. . .firebombed"

When European economic growth slowed in the 1980s and unemployment increased, attitudes toward foreign workers and their families changed. Even though many had resided in Europe for a generation or more, Pakistanis in England were violently assaulted in their own neighborhoods and Turkish homes in Germany were firebombed. In France the reaction against immigrants took the shape of a new extremist political movement ominously called the National Front (FN) which is now the fourth largest political party. Its growth has come by exploiting the fears that accompany economic stagnation. For example, a notorious FN poster states, "Three million unemployed, that's three million immigrants too many!"

The French Reformed Church (ERF), our ecumenical partner, is engaged in a careful process of reading, reflection and dialogue, trying to define an authentic Christian response to the presence of immigrants in French society. The title of the process, *Etranger, etrangers*, can be translated *Stranger, foreigners*.

In 1996 the ERF published a five-part resource called "Eglise en Debats," or "Church in Dialogue." It provided the basis for study and discussion which began two years ago in the 400 congregations of the ERF, continued last year in regional forums, moved on to regional synods and will culminate at national synod this May in Nantes. There, delegates are expected to endorse a statement which (unlike UCC synodal resolutions) speaks not only to but also for the congregations of the ERF.

". . .occasion for a deeper consideration of the Christian's responsibility, recognizing that Scripture has much to say..."

The Reformed Church of France has a long and justly famous history of social involvement. Unquestionably, the political rise of the National Front has brought a sense of urgency to the immigrants issue. But the dialogue documents confirm that the process is not the pretext for arriving at a political program. *Stranger, foreigners* is the occasion for a deeper consideration of the Christian's responsibility, recognizing that scripture has much to say about strangers, not only foreigners. As one pastor remarked, "If we don't feel like strangers ourselves, what good is the Bible?"

Two fundamental questions guide the dialogue: 1) How does the immigrant issue affect our identity as Christians?, and 2) How do our faith and its expressions influence our personal and collective decisions regarding immigrants?

The commitment of the whole church to this process is palpable. At one regional synod, delegates came up with four affirmations which only begin to suggest the rich and rewarding discussions which preceeded the drafting —

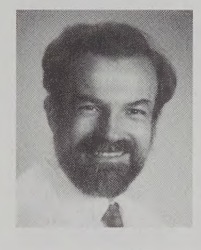
1) The church does not exist for its own sake, but for the sake of others; 2) The church should not adopt a simplistic approach to the complex issues raised by the presence of immigrants; 3) Immigrants are not a distant abstraction but a real presence in our midst; and 4) The duty of the church is to live out its mission in solidarity with immigrants.

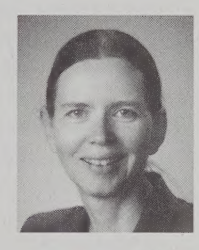
Much remains for further deliberation. But it is abundantly clear from work already done that, in this case at least, the process itself is at least as important as the final product.

Missionary appointments

(Continued from page 1)

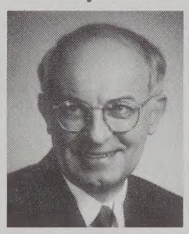
College in Suva.





The Johnson-Hills also expressed concern about hundreds of thousands of street children in the Durban, South Africa, area, orphaned because of AIDS. Lydia said it is people in their teens, 20s and 30s who are being affected.

Kenneth and Michal Dobson returned Jan. 1 to Thailand where they will serve another three-year term with the Church of Christ in



Thailand, Kenneth serving in the pastoral ministry unit. Michal is assigned to the Chiang Mai International School as an elementary school teacher. She also assists in curriculum development.

Betty and Ken Frank will begin another three-year term with the Near East Mission, assigned to the American Collegiate Institute in Izmir, Turkey, beginning June 1. Ken teaches math and works in the area of Christian-Muslim relations. Betty will continue serving as the school's librarian.

The Franks have been serving in Turkey since 1982 and previous to that taught nine years in Zambia. During the meeting they were presented with medallions in recognition of their 25 years of service.

Sharing life, hope
(Recent OGHS grants)

One Great Hour of Sharing continues to minister in emergencies throughout the world. Through your gifts to this offering, immediate response and support for long-term rehabilitation is present in every major disaster occurring around the globe. Directed gifts make their mark as well. Information on some recent emergencies follows. For more, contact Linda Petrucelli, executive for the Global Sharing of Resources, at 212/870-2283, fax 212/932-1236 or email <petrucel@ucc.org>.

- **Dansalan College**, the Philippines: This historic UCBWM partner suffered a $24,000 fire and $10,000 in OGHS funds were sent by the UCBWM to help in the rebuilding process. There were no injuries or loss of life but smoke covered the campus during the blaze. Staff salvaged student records, historic photographs and other irreplaceable items and called it a "Christmas miracle" that only three rooms were destroyed.

- **Marshall Islands**: Typhoon Paka ripped through here, where missionaries Karl and Jan Whiteman are stationed. Happily they are safe. $4,000 in OGHS funds were sent to our partner there, and repairs have begun at the Theological College of the Marshall Islands, where Karl is a professor.

- **Chiapas massacre, Mexico**: Thousands of Indian refugees from this southern Mexican state continue to flee villages following a Dec. 22 massacre in which 45 unarmed civilians were killed. The UCBWM sent $3,000 to Church World Service in response to its appeal for this disaster, and $5,000 to the Diocese of San Cristobal de las Casas, which is working in the area, for clothing, diapers, blankets, tents and food.

- **Andhra Pradesh floods, India**: The UCBWM sent $3,000 to CWS in response to an Action by Churches Together appeal for this disaster, caused by heavy rains throughout the last quarter of 1997. At least 207 people are reported to have perished, and both urban and rural areas affected as infrastructure, houses, water sources, crops and other property were destroyed. Our partner there, Church's Auxiliary for Social Action, initiated relief response targeted at immediate needs.

- **Vietnam floods**: South Vietnam is recovering from November's Typhoon Linda thanks in part to $2,000 in OGHS support sent by UCBWM at the time. More than 200,000 homes were either destroyed or damaged, most those of fisherfolk. Approximately 5,000 people who had been clinging to buoys or broken boat planks were rescued by government ships and helicopters.

- **Somalia flooding**: Up to one million people were affected by this ongoing emergency, to which the UCBWM contributed $7,000 in OGHS gifts. At least 230,000 have been displaced as they fled from submerged villages and tried to stay ahead of the flooding. Already, more than 60,000 hectares of crops and sorghum and cereal reserves have been destroyed. Blankets were rushed to some 5,000 survivors.

Flood update

The Rev. Richard Tosh of the Federated Church in Grand Forks, ND, has issued a report on what has been accomplished in that community through the generosity of UCC and other persons since the flooding. Projects include —

- A Saturday afternoon for 75 adults and children to make Christmas decorations assisted by five artists/crafters;
- A Habitat for Humanity house built by matching donations from several sources including the Northern Plains Conference UCC;
- Granting the wish of a terminally ill child whose diagnosis was postponed due to flood-related hospital closing;
- Work with abused women and children;
- School transportation for children living in temporary housing;
- Day care for 12 families with an experienced child care professional who had lost her home in the flood.

Tosh wishes to thank many people for their support of the work of Federated Church "in a fragile community," and asks for continuing prayers.

Opportunities

- An ecumenical study tour to Indonesia from Aug. 12-30, 1998, is being sponsored by Church World Service and Witness (CWSW) in cooperation with the Southern Asia Office of the Common Global Ministries Board. Participants will travel to such places as Bali, Central and West Java, Sulawesi, and possibly East Timor. The fourth most populous nation in the world, Indonesia has both the world's largest Muslim population and the largest number of Protestant Christians in Asia. Until the recent Asian financial crisis, its economic growth rate exceeded that of the U.S. for each of the last 10 years. Registration deadline is April 30.

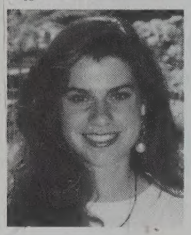
  For a brochure and further information contact the Southern Asia Office at 475 Riverside Dr., 16th Floor, New York, NY 10115-0109 at 212/870-2838, or email <tankersb@ucc.org>.

- A travel seminar to South Africa, "Reconciliation and Renewal from a Global Perspective," is being offered Aug. 17-30, 1998, by the Plowshares Institute and the Ecumenical Institute. Goals include meeting with leaders who are committed to a more just, democratic and non-racial South Africa; examining the role of the church as a reconciling and empowering agent in the new society; and assessing the effect of North American and international government, business and academic policies on the new South Africa. Participants will be exposed to proposals for change in land reform, education, housing and health in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban and Cape Town. Application deadline is May 1. For additional information contact the Institute at P.O. Box 243, Simsbury, CT 06070, or by phone (860/651-4304); fax (860/651-4305) or email <evansr@hgc.edu>.

- Church World Service is now accepting applications for the Amity Foundation Teachers Program for two years of teaching English in China. For more information call David Herrell, CWS Manager of Overseas Personnel, at 212/870-2630.

How We See It From Here

Amy Gopp, *Associate, serves as a peace consultant assigned to Christian Information Service (CIS), based in Zagreb, Croatia. In recent months she has been wrestling with what it means to be the church in a land divided by different cultures, histories, religions and war.*



We need to again claim that we are indeed the Body of Christ. I see more and more a role for CIS to urge and encourage the Church in Croatia to globalize, to not be scared of "the Other," and to truly claim the meaning of catholic. When will we become the universal church in a real, active, visible way? I have been so shocked, both in Graz (site of the Second European Ecumenical Assembly) and in general, at how politicized the Church is. To feel and actually witness the Church as a manipulative instrument rather than one of healing and reconciliation is difficult. It seems so contradictory to what I understand Jesus to have intended his Body to be. Yet the Church must be a political entity without being politicized, and that is a thin and dangerous tightrope to walk. Certainly the Church in Europe is especially vulnerable and self-protective during this transitional period and must search for itself. How can it find and express its own voice separate from the nationalistic voice of the state?

"There is no war, but there is no peace."

(Recently) we helped a Serbian family return to their hometown in southern Croatia which, before now, very few people have attempted to do. The reunion with family and friends was very moving but extremely difficult. Those family members who stayed behind during the war could not give optimistic reports about their life as a minority in Croatia. Nevertheless, perhaps one day my friends will be able to return to live there again as they would love to do. Until that time we can only pray and continue to try and create conditions for true peace. There are many issues and much work to be done. Moreover, this is still a "war zone." There is no war, but there is no peace.

Terry Ogawa, *19, currently a student at the College of Charleston, SC, was one of 16 young people who spent nine months traveling together in 1996 in the international youth and young adult Project Oikos (Greek for God's household) program. The youth examined the life and witness of host churches in four countries, living, working and struggling together for meaning in a constantly changing mix of cultures, issues and personalities. Terry is a member of Circular Congregational Church, Charleston, SC. Her remarks are taken from an address given at the Common Global Ministries Board gathering last November.*

There were times when all 16 of us thought we were going crazy, after 14-hour discussions in which no one seemed to agree, or perhaps in the frustration of seeing entire communities of people walked over by their governments. Such random struggles as well as joys came together as a whole and influenced each of us in different ways.

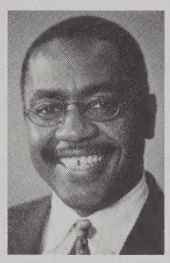
We shared our common perspectives and learned through common experiences that there are countless ways to see a singular situation. We learned just as much from each other as we did from the program and exposures.

". . .the ways in which I see and learn are forever changed."

What a strong rite of passage. And now I somehow know who I am and what I am capable of. I AM going to be somebody who helps to bring about great social change, and NOBODY is going to stop me. Can you feel that determination and fire? That is what Project Oikos gave to me when nothing else could. I still have so much to learn, but the ways in which I see and learn are forever changed. There are 15 others around the world who have that same light because of Oikos, not to mention the communities who shared in that spirit as they hosted us, and those whom we are still visiting and writing.

Part of that word, Oikos, meaning "household," means bringing others into the community of God which is struggling for justice. I have been brought into that community, and I so much want to thank this organization and each person who helped make it possible. You have given all of us a gift greater than will ever be measured.

Lawrence Burnley, *Global Ministries executive for Racial Ethnic Constituency Education and Development, recently returned from a trip to the All Africa Conference of Churches held in Ethiopia under the theme "Trouble, But Not Destroyed," to find his thinking had been challenged on several levels.*



I am struck by the paradox Africa presents. On the one hand there is a zeal for the gospel of Jesus the Christ, people who are deeply spiritual and whose values give primacy to community over that of the individual, reverence for the earth and a sense of the unity of all creation. On the other hand we have these most noble traits existing in the midst of unparalleled sociopolitical turmoil and human suffering.

". . .choosing between becoming 'developed' by Western standards or contextualizing the gospel. . ."

The church in Africa seems to find itself existing within a tension which would seem to have them choosing between becoming "developed" by Western standards or contextualizing the gospel in such a way that moves Africa toward re-embracing the life giving and community building values of her ancestors; values lost or diminished as a result of colonial and neo-colonialism. How does one become a democratized nation built upon a free market economy; a nation that meets the very basic needs of its people; is competitive in the global market economy and at the same time prevents itself from developing a socioeconomic and political infrastructure which encourages the development of militarism, violence, the ecological rape of the earth, greed, individualism, the exploitation of the weaker members of society, etc? These are all characteristics of the so-called "developed" nations. As we respond to God's call to "go to the ends of the earth" for the sake of the gospel, are we trying to help our partners become "developed" like us? Perhaps people in Africa and other parts of the world are bearers of gifts from God that may help us be transformed to the point of having a very different understanding of what it means to be a "developed" person, church or nation.

Issue Perspective:

In his cover story for the December 21, 1997, *New York Times Magazine* entitled "The Rage Over Christian Persecution," Jeffrey Goldberg recounts a confrontation in the U.S. between Nina Shea, religion expert for Freedom House, and Archbishop Lutfi Laham, Greek Catholic patriarchal vicar in Jerusalem. The Archbishop, described as representing "a group of West Bank Christians who are experiencing growing discrimination from their Muslim fundamentalist neighbors," was, it seems, disturbed by Shea's "confrontational tone." The titles of two books on display at the conference, Shea's own *In the Lion's Den* and *Their Blood Cries Out* by Paul Marshall, are "not helpful," according to Archbishop Laham.

If I know Archbishop Laham, and I do know Archbishop Laham, I am sure that this was far from the whole story of what he had to say about the situation of Christians in the West Bank. I am sure that at some point in

". . .a calculated effort to make life. . .miserable. . ."

his presentation he must have mentioned Israeli policies that make it increasingly difficult for Christians even to maintain a presence in their ancestral lands — denial of Jerusalem ID's to and consequent expulsion of Palestinian Christians and Muslims on the grounds that Jerusalem is "not the center of their life"; denials of permits to enable Palestinian families to build homes even in areas under the administration of the Palestinian Authority, a calculated effort to make life so miserable for Palestinians, among them Christians, that they will have no real alternative to emigration or submission to daily humiliation. I am sure of this because every conversation I have had with Archbishop Laham and other Palestinian Christian leaders begins and ends with this plaint. Tension with Muslims is a topic raised, almost always, by outsiders.

Effect is devastating

The measures mentioned above and others beyond the scope of this reflection (and perhaps too tedious to recount here) do not carry the customary emotional impact of the more classic images and realities of persecution — torture and execution, slavery, overt and egregious discrimination, banning of religious training or even of sacred scriptures — but their effect is nevertheless real and devastating. What is at stake for Christians in the Holy Land is not so much physical survival (Christians, more than their Muslim neighbors, often have the resources and the contacts to emigrate) as it is spiritual survival. Will Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Nazareth become museums — or worse, theme parks — for Christians from the West?

But Israeli policy is not the subject at hand here; instead it is what Goldberg himself refers to as the "discovery" of Christian persecution. In

". . .omissions. . .when what they have to say is 'inconvenient.'"

order to deal with this subject with some measure of fidelity to what Christians in the Middle East have said to me, however, it is necessary to examine critically presentations of the issue by those who would place it at the top of the U.S. human rights agenda. And Goldberg's article, which is actually more balanced than most, is a case in point. There are those omissions of what Christians themselves have to say about the subject when what they have to say is "inconvenient." Were Archbishop Laham's or Latin Patriarch Sabbah's comments on Israeli policy to become the thrust of this article, there would be no article.

The omissions, however, are important, because they point to a fundamental and compromising feature of the movement which Shea, *New York Times* columnist A.M. Rosenthal and activist Michael Horowitz have championed. It is, as Goldberg points out, that the defense of persecuted Christians is but a "means to an end, the end being to overturn the established — that is, liberal — order."

Utilitarian approach

For Christians of the Middle East, this must have a familiar ring to it, for much of the history of Middle Eastern Christianity's relationship with the West, and in particular western Christianity, has been characterized by what most charitably can be described as a "utilitarian" approach. During the Ottoman period, Christian minorities were a "wedge issue" for the colonial powers as they competed for influence in the region, all the while seeking to undermine the legitimacy of the Ottoman Empire. In the mid-19th century, France adopted the Lebanese Marionite community as a way of countering the British who, in turn, allied themselves with the Druze. While there were certainly some homegrown tensions between these two communities in Lebanon, it may be argued that the involvement of the colonial powers exacerbated the situation and contributed to what became a massacre of the Christians which, in turn, became a part of the mind-set that contributed to the Lebanese Civil War of 1975-1991. An

". . .expendable in the 'new order'. . ."

even worse fate befell the Armenians, who were badly misled by colonial powers who professed sympathy for their national cause when they were opposing the Ottomans, only to find that they were expendable in the "new order" following World War I.

Being adopted as a "wedge issue" by groups and individuals who have a broader political agenda in the U.S. could prove similarly disastrous for Middle Eastern Christians, particularly when such groups and individuals have ties to Israel. Archbishop Laham may consistently protest Israeli policy, and he does, but he will receive publicity only if and when he criticizes "fundamentalist Islam." This, in turn, will tie him to American policy goals, which include uncritical support of Israel. Christianity, which preceded from the Holy Land, will — despite the best efforts of Middle Eastern Christians — be viewed as a "western religion," with all that such an association implies. Christians, in turn, will be seen as foreigners in their own homelands.

Some real issues

All this being said, however, there are real issues to be addressed regarding the status of Christians and other minorities in majority Islamic societies. In the Sudan, Islamic law is invoked as a pretext for discrimination against, and persecution of, Christians and animists from the South — most of whom are non-Arab. Christians in other countries in the Middle East are, to a greater or lesser extent, penalized for their religious identity either in the formulation of laws or in the unjust application of existing laws, and this is true in avowedly secular as well as Islamic

states. It is the case, for example, that the President of Egypt (nominally a secular country) must personally approve even the renovation of a bathroom in a church.

Indeed, one of the issues that must be discussed between Christians and Muslims is the distinction between freedom and toleration. Muslims argue, with a great deal of history on their side, that minorities in the Islamic societies have fared far better than minorities in Christian societies. They will point out, for example, that Jews persecuted in Spain dur-

> ***". . .return to the fundamental tenets not only of toleration, which is the prerogative of the strong, but of equality. . .status given to all children of God."***

ing the Inquisition successfully sought refuge in Ottoman Turkey. But such arguments from history ring increasingly hollow in modern times as Islam is co-opted, or incorporated into, the apparatus of control in the modern nation state.

I would argue that we need to return to fundamental tenets not only of toleration, which is the prerogative of the strong, but of equality, which is a status given to all children of God. How can one fashion a faithful Christian or Muslim society that assures all of their God-given equality? And related is the question of human rights. Are human rights to be bestowed as a favor by the powerful, as a matter of self-imposed obligation, or do they inhere to the very status of being human? These are the kinds of things we should be discussing with Muslims as issues in our shared Abraham tradition. Both Christians and Muslims have abused that tradition historically. Can we rediscover it together without the kind of reductionist logic that characterizes so much of the current discourse?

Martyrdom

There is in Jeffrey Goldberg's account of the meeting between Archbishop Laham and Nina Shea a poignant moment occasioned by Shea's use of the term "martyrdom." Goldberg relates that the Archbishop let out a sigh. "Martyrdom is glorious," he later said. In his sigh, however, is the experience of the centuries and an understanding of faith and faithfulness that would elude most American Christians.

The Arabic word for "martyrdom" is *shihadah*. The word comes from a verb root meaning "to witness, to see with one's own eyes." The same word is also used to denote the confession of faith that makes a Muslim a Muslim. "There is no god except God, and Muhammad is his messenger." In the culture of which Middle Eastern Christians are a part, confession implies witnessing, which in turn implies the possibility of making the ultimate witness, martyrdom. The sigh, and the statement that

> ***". . .a world view that ties faith to life. . ."***

"Martyrdom is glorious," are expressions of a world view that ties faith to life, that demands that faith be taken so seriously that one is willing to die for it.

When I have discussed martyrdom and persecution with Middle Eastern Christians, I have been impressed by their understanding of suffering, by an understanding that may appear to some as fatalistic or quietist. There is that sense that witnessing to one's faith, even, and perhaps especially, in adversity is a part of what it means to be a Christian. One UCC church in Wisconsin was admonished by a visitor from Egypt, a Coptic nun, that "what you need is some persecution." How, indeed, can one be faithful if being a Christian is understood to imply "respectability" and "security"?

This should not be taken to be an argument for turning a blind eye toward the suffering of our co-religionists in the Middle East and elsewhere. Indeed, they require our support and, more importantly, our solidarity. But it is, I hope, an explanation for my impatience with those who would turn the self-sacrificing love of others into political currency for an internal debate in U.S. society. To do so would represent both a degradation of the sacrifice of those who have chosen to be faithful and a cheapening of our own faith.

Dale Bishop, Area Executive for the Middle East

Note: This article first appeared in the January/February issue of *Jisr (Bridge)*, a newsletter published by the Middle East Office. For more coverage of this issue from the standpoint of Christian-Muslim relations, you may request a copy of that publication by phone (212/870-2835), fax (212/932-1236), or email (abrahamt@ucc.org>.

The enduring scourge

***Lawrence and Carol Gilley**, now on home assignment after nine years in Mozambique, related the following story about a landmine survivor in a recent missionary letter.*

In a letter to President Clinton urging him to support a ban on landmines, a United Methodist missionary doctor serving nearby at Chicuque Hospital wrote about a man he had cared for —

Jose is a strong, 30-year-old Mozambican farmer who arrived at our emergency room last month. He had been on his knees opening up some new ground for his crop with his short-handled hoe when he struck one of Mozambique's two million anti-personnel landmines. The mine must have been slanted away from him because he only received the blast effect. But that was enough. It burst the globes of both eyes, splitting the lower lid margins. In the operating room we enucleated one globe but there was enough left of the other to leave it as a filler. His eye sockets and the blast burns on his hand and forehead healed quickly, but he was totally blind. He always smiled at our voices, and was eager to get on with his life.

At discharge, we sent him to get two prostheses — one for his eye and another for the leg he lost when he stepped on his first landmine in 1990.

Making the local global and the global local

***Stephanie Stoltzfus**, a member of St. Paul's UCC, Fleetwood, PA, is spending a year in Quilmes, Argentina, as a Rotary exchange student. Before she left Pennsylvania, she told her pastor that she would miss all her church activities. How could she be involved in Argentina?*

*The pastor sent an email message to Global Ministries missionaries in Argentina, **Jodi and Timothy Bobbitt**, which resulted in the name of a local church pastor the Bobbitts had met, and that information was passed on to Stephanie. A letter to her pastor several weeks later is exerpted below.*

Last night I went to my first church service here in Argentina. I contacted the person that you found through the Internet, Silvina Carolno. She is the pastor of a church in Bernal. Last night I hopped on a bus filled with all sorts of anxieties and headed out there. I walked into a tiny building to the sound of organ music coming from a very small organ. The church only had about 12 pews. The congregation was composed of about 15 people that evening, but each one greeted me upon entering with a kiss

> ***". . .each one greeted me upon entering with a kiss. . ."***

which is customary to Argentina, but it felt very welcoming. The service was almost two hours but it went fast. They have lots of silent time for prayer and it is very non-formal. Kids play in the center while the parents worship and people feel free to just yell out something if they feel like it (not actually yell but speak openly). They had a Bible study led by a member of the congregation in which we all got into a circle and discussed a passage. Then the pastor gave the sermon and we sang lots of songs accompanied by a guitar, which reminded me of camp when I was young. Everything was in Spanish, of course, so I had difficulty understanding and got slightly frustrated. But I must tell you the effect this service had on me.

Tears came to my eyes when I heard people thanking God in their own language. And when I sang the songs in Spanish, to simple hymns, I knew they were saying exactly what I was used to back home. I felt so delighted to think that all over the world people are worshiping God in all sorts of languages – not just in the old Fleetwood. I must say, being able to experience that brought comfort and broadened my horizons.

After the service a girl, 20, came up and started talking about all sorts of things. It turns out that she lives about 15 blocks from my house in Quilmes and goes to the same university that I was going to for Spanish classes. We

> ***". . .they were saying exactly what I was used to back home."***

made plans to go out for coffee sometime, which excited me for I was feeling in need of finding a Christian friend. Also, a family that had come from Australia five years ago invited me back to their house for dinner. Needless to say, I felt very accepted by the members of this church. I hope I will be able to continue to attend even when I move to other towns with other families.

Warning against 'McDonaldisation'

A Polish Roman Catholic official, speaking in Warsaw in November, warned against the "McDonaldisation" of European culture.

Bishop Tadeusz Pieronek, secretary-general of Poland's Roman Catholic Bishop's Conference, suggested that European culture "must defend itself against the so-called inflow of American influences." He also said it is necessary to struggle against "cultural mediocrity" in defense of not only the church but also of "true European culture."

Just as we are

*In a recent email letter **Diane Wicks**, Global Ministries missionary in South Africa, tells of a conversation she and a colleague had about Lazarus, who had been attending an empowerment workshop where the two serve at St. George's Church in Durban. Lazarus had shared with them tht he had never been able to count on anyone or believe that they really loved him but that he now knew that they cared about him and so he felt differently about his life...more open to love.*

We met Lazarus five years ago. He was in that first group to receive vocational training. He occasionally wrote articles in Homeless Talk a few years ago. He also attended support group regularly. Sometimes he would disappear for months, returning home to his family, but would come back to Johannesburg disappointed, wounded and reassured that he would be smart to only count on himself for survival.

This past year he became more and more stable, rarely missing group or workshop. We hired him to help with the cleaning at the church and he takes his responsibility quite seriously. He is a joy to have around; he always has been. What's different now is that he lets people see behind his light-hearted exterior into his beautiful, wounded, healing heart.

We celebrated this wonderful breakthrough. It took five years of consistent love, acceptance, welcome and appreciation for him to begin to trust that there wouldn't also be a hand to slap it all away if he messed up. We agreed that one of the most important parts of our outreach ministry is that consistent welcome and acceptance – just as you are, for as long as it takes.

Asian Rural Institute home page

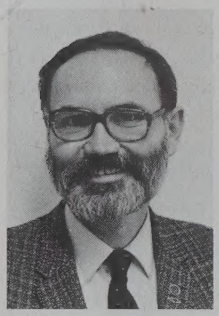
The Asian Rural Institute (ARI), a Global Ministries partner in Japan, has a home page presence on the world wide web. ARI web pages include its newsletter, *Take My Hand*, an annual report, photos of the campus, and a video clip from a past CNN report on ARI. It will also soon include the song "Take My Hand," written by former ARI staff member Christopher Grundy, who is now associate pastor at Plymouth Congregational Church, Lawrence, KS.

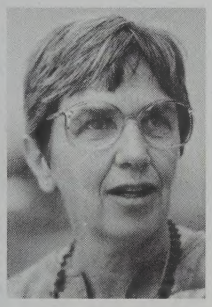
The home page address is <http://www.stolaf.edu/people/cdr/ari/>. Craig Rice, an ARI friend and staff member at St. Olaf College in Minnesota, would welcome comments on the ARI web pages. His email address is <cdr@stolaf.edu>.

Service in his heart, ink in his blood

In another life, Lawrence Gilley surely was a printer. In all his years in mission in southern Africa, Larry has never been without a way to print educational materials.

He and his wife Carol have been involved in educational ministry for more than 30 years in South Africa, Swaziland and Mozambique, with an appointment in Kuruman, South Africa pending. If approved by the Common Global Board in April, Larry will become principal of the Kalahari Desert School of Theology and Carol will become director of educational resources, including the mission library.





Larry, Carol Gilley

Though always primarily engaged in teaching, Larry has been moonlighting for decades to produce literally tons of Christian education materials for partner churches and related groups. You name it, he's printed it — Sunday School and theological education by extension materials, liturgies, lectionaries, adult literacy readers, a "cookbook" for worship leaders, a book of services around death, a book on evangelism. . . .

". . .rugged and magnificent in its simplicity."

This summer on a trip to Kuruman he printed 25 copies of London Missionary Society missionary Robert Moffat's original translation of the Lord's Prayer in Setswana on Moffat's original press. This machine produced the first Bible ever printed in Africa — in 1857. "The press still works like new, has few moving parts, is rugged and magnificent in its simplicity."

Larry's love affair with printing began on the southern coast of South Africa in the early 60s with an inherited Roneo stencil duplicator. Through his work in ecumenical Christian education, Larry learned that the Methodists had two Multilith 1250 offset duplicators. Their work space in Durban was "a wonderful place of machinery, piles of newly printed materials and smells of paper, ink and cleaning fluids."

". . .the mysteries of offset, and got ink under my fingernails."

But it was on a secondhand Gestetner offset duplicator that he first learned "the mysteries of offset, and got ink under my fingernails."

The first machine under his care was a Multilith 80, in 1970. "It was primitive. Registration could vary 25 millimeters. It was slow and reliable. Like an old car, everything was accessible and transparent — you could fix it yourself." His print shop was in a storeroom filled with crates of Zulu hymnbooks, dust and roosting pigeons. "On warm, humid Durban nights I ran hundreds of reams of paper through my model 80 — clunk-clackety-clunk — late into the night. I taught my children to collate and fold paper. I was also checked out by (the police in the apartheid years), who were 'visiting' the South African Student Organisation upstairs."

In 1974, in South Africa, it was a new Roneo table top offset duplicator. In 1978, in Swaziland, Larry persuaded the Anglicans to donate a machine they weren't using. In 1988, in Mozambique, he was relegated to a couple of unreliable stencil duplicators, and began to look for equipment he could afford and a way to get it into the country.

"I could see that it needed a lot of work."

Finally, in 1992, Myles Walburn, then treasurer of the UCBWM, noticed in Larry's annual report that he still needed a duplicator, and offered him the Board's old Multilith 1250. From New York it arrived in Maputo and was delivered to the Mozambican Christian Council and loaded onto one of their trucks along with emergency food aid destined for Inhambane. The truck joined a military escort. It took over two days to cover the 500 kilometers to Maxixe. There was a detour due to a bridge collapse. The convoy started mid-mornings and

PRINTING THE LORD'S PRAYER on Moffat's "rugged, magnificent" press

stopped in safe places mid-afternoons to reduce chances of being attacked. When the truck arrived at Balaza it took 12 strong men to lower the crate and get it into the church office. Larry had waited a long time, so he uncrated it immediately. "I could see that it needed a lot of work."

The press refused to run until he stripped it of all OSHA safety switches. Spare parts and materials were ordered from Johannesburg, 1,000 kilometers away. He bought a master maker, paper cutter, fountain solution, blanket wash, ink, blankets, master material and paper. Delivery took two more years, but most everything was broken. Even the 20-liter blanket wash container arrived empty from a nail in its bottom incurred during the crating process. Little by little, Larry pieced things together and was finally able to do some printing in 1996. He taught students to operate the machines, and everyone was still learning when the Gilleys left for their current home assignment. "The duplicator has joined lots of other mechanical miracles in Mozambique. Cars and trucks run

". . .joined lots of other mechanical miracles. . ."

all day long which would have been scrapped and compacted years ago in most countries. Patience, ingenuity and necessity keep them running."

UCBWM predecessor missionaries with the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission had two presses in Mozambique in 1883. With hand typesetting, they organized

(Continued on page 10)

ARI grad speaks out on environmental struggle

***Shamanthaka (Shammi) David,** a 1996 graduate of the Asian Rural Institute in Japan who works for CORD, an organization working for the rights of tribal people, writes in an ARI alumni letter about a struggle going on in the Coorg district in Nagarhole, India.*

The Eco Development plan with World Bank assistance has taken place in seven national parks in India, including the Nagarhole National Park, and people are forced to exit from the forest area. This forest land is given to Taj Group of hotels for 18 years to run the hotel. The Taj Group people are international capitalists who run a hotel business. This resort has definitely created negative aspects in the mind and life of tribal people in Nagarhole. They feel that they are aliens in their own land, that they are losing their culture, values and identity. Their valuable heritage forest is being used for commercial purposes. They and we feel that this "Eco Tourism" has become "Eco Terrorism" in the lives of these people. The situation leads to prostitution, harassment, exploitation, etc. We have written to World Bank and other organizations inside and outside India to pressure the government of India to stop this type of development.

CWS Hotline: Call 1-800/456-1310

Mutually beneficial

Sometimes unexpected benefits are realized both directly and indirectly through Global Ministries relationships.

This was the case of a Vermont congregation which has been enriched by the presence and international experience of a pastor from Germany, and her home church, which has broadened its outlook to ministry beyond its own borders.

Bettina Kluenemann, of Germany, has been working as an assistant pastor at the Congregational Church, UCC, of Middlebury, VT, in recent months. She is fully engaged in the life of the church and finds the congregation "open and welcoming; very interested in all kinds of church work, a great mix. . . ." She is especially interested in how closely various churches in that area work together, and "how well they are all cooperating with the community. A lot to learn for me."

Last year Kenneth Ziebell, Global Ministries Europe executive, had written a letter affirming the relationship between the UCC and the Evangelical Church of the Union (EKU, a Global Ministries partner) in Germany as a part of Bettina's visa process. Encouraged by folk at the Middlebury church, she decided to request ordination from her home church, the Evangelical Church of Hesse and Nassau, even though that church doesn't normally ordain for working in another church. They said yes, and Bettina was ordained in November, in Germany. "I am very pleased that my German church did this step forward," Bettina said.

Among Germany's 24 Protestant regional churches, Hesse-Nassau is one of five which are "united" (i.e., both Reformed and Lutheran) and yet are not a part of the EKU, for the purely historical reason that their territory was not included in the area governed by the King of Prussia in 1817, Ziebell explained, when the EKU's original predecessor body was created. Hence Hesse-Nassau has not had the long and active direct experience with the UCC which the EKU regional churches have had.

By the way, since her employment began in January 1997, Bettina and her fiancé, a medical doctor from Burlington, were married and had their first child, Felix, in December. "The congregation celebrates all these events enthusiastically with us and it is great to have their loving support in a foreign country."

UCC Home Page
www.ucc.org
DISCIPLES Home Page
www.disciples.org

Human rights; pray for Burma

1998 is the year of the 50th anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights adopted in 1948 by the United Nations General Assembly. The United Church of Christ and The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) have been participants in the process since the beginning.

The declaration includes an "affirmation of the intrinsic worth of each human being, and the right of each individual to the fullest possible opportunity for the development of abundant life."

Christians Concerned for Burma have announced that a second Global Day of Prayer in Burma will be held March 15, 1998, and has requested the formation of prayer groups to pray for Burma, not only those who are suffering but for the dictatorship itself.

In spite of increased world outcries and U.S.-imposed economic sanctions, human rights atrocities in Burma by the military dictatorship there continue, and religious persecution is increasing. There are now more than two million internally displaced persons in Burma, and over 390,000 refugees have fled the country. Torture, rape and killing of civilians, along with ethnic cleansing, continues unabated.

Persons interested in further information about Christians Concerned for Burma should contact the Global Ministries Southern Asia Office, 475 Riverside Dr., 16th Floor, New York, NY 10115, at 212/870-2838, fax 212/932-1236, or email <tankersb@ucc.org>.

Ink in his blood

(Continued from page 9)

the translation and printing of scripture, hymns, and Gospel stories on letterpress machines that took one sheet at a time. "They taught people to translate, to set type, to operate the press and to bind the books. They, also, had to teach people to read. They had to learn Bitonga and Xitshwa. Like me, they only had a small part of their time available for the production of literature. I have read their statistics. What they accomplished is impressive."

Needless to say, Larry feels some "kinship and continuity" with all who have produced Christian literature in the African languages.

Sometimes Larry dreams of printing as "an important ministry, a continuation of work done by early missionaries and perhaps as something to be developed into something bigger. But in the morning I know that my real reasons for printing are more mundane. I like the feel of the paper, the smell of the ink, the sound of the duplicator. . . ." He'll feel, smell and hear it all again when he and Carol return to Africa — and that "rugged and magnificent" Moffat printing press — in June.

Chronicle

NEW RESOURCES: ecumenical, Jerusalem packets; videos

LOSSES TO THE FAMILY

Martha (Lolly) Artopoeus, who with her husband Otto served overseas six years, died Nov. 25, 1997, at the age of 75. They were involved in education, administrative and evangelical work in central India in the Chattisgarh area and were among the teams of Christians who provided relief to millions of displaced persons at the time of the partition of British India into Pakistan and India. She also served as a member of the UCBWM Corporation. She is survived by her husband.

Stanley Wilke, who instituted mission education tours which sent lay leaders from the UCC to mission areas around the world for more than a third of a century, died in October. Services were held at St. Peter's UCC in Washington, Missouri.

Agnes A. Wood, 101, died Jan. 20, 1998, in Grinnell, IA. She served 36 years in Durban, South Africa, beginning her work at Inanda Seminary for girls. In addition to serving as associate principal and teaching domestic science and math, she frequently visited outlying villages to teach women and girls in their homes. She was a member of the Bantu Congregational Church and served it in many capacities.

GIFTS IN MEMORY OF

Martha Artopoeus
Otto Artopoeus
St. John's UCC
Thomas Vossmeyer

Lavinia Scott
H. Telfer Mook

Hilda and Wadie Said
Mariam Said

Protest abuse

SOUTH AFRICA – More than 1,000 men, led by church and public officials, marched in the city of Pretoria in November to highlight the alarming incidence of abuse of women and children in South Africa. It was reported that one in six women experiences domestic violence.

From Global Ministries ...

On May 3, UCC and Disciples churches celebrate Ecumenical Partnership Sunday. This year, to lift up the common global work of the two denominations, Global Ministries is offering a packet of resources for the event. The

packet, which will be available in early March, includes —

- Sermon aids with a global emphasis
- Litany and prayers
- Ideas for youth and adult education
- Suggestions for week day and weekend events

To order a packet use the coupon below.

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Telephone: _____

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To order a resource packet, please return to: Global Ministries Communication and Interpretation P.O. Box 1986 Indianapolis, IN 46206
Packets will be available in early March.

From the Middle East Office ...

A packet, "Jerusalem: what kind of city?" is available from the Global Ministries Middle East Office in New York. It contains resolutions passed last summer at both the UCC's General Synod and the Disciples' General Assembly which ask members of both denominations to reflect on the religious significance of the city.

Included is a pamphlet, "Jerusalem and the Peace Process," by Churches for Middle East Peace, and a Bible study called "The Things That Make for Peace; Palestinian Christians Reflect on Today's Jerusalem." For a copy contact the Middle East Office by phone (212/870-2835), fax (212/932-1236) or email <abrahamt@ucc.org>.

OGHS Bible study, video ...

Bible study for use with One Great Hour of Sharing videos: *Open Wide Your Hearts* (1997), *Dare to Share* (1996), *Fabric of Faith* (1995). If your church does not have the videos call United Church of Christ Resources, 800/325-7061, for a free copy and the Bible study.

Human rights *Book of Days*...

Building Beloved Community, a Study/Action Book of Days, which celebrates the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is available from

Church World Service and Witness. It is a generic rather than year-specific calendar that may be used in any month of the year. Each month hightlights different human rights and suggests study and action ideas, worship and resources. Order for $3 each plus $1.25 for first class postage from the Office for International Justice and Human Rights, 475 Riverside Dr., New York, NY 10115.

Free landmines video ...

Every 20 minutes someone is killed by a landmine. A 9-minute video, *Landmines: overcoming a lethal legacy*, is available from Church World Service. For a copy call CWS at 1-800/297-1516.

Also from CWS ...

The CWS Office on Global Education is offering a new scriptural card set. Twenty-four two-color cards (four each of six designs) are blank inside and fit standard 3 1/4 x 6 1/2-inch envelopes (not included) at $8 per box. The order number is ED 9736 from CWS at P.O. Box 968, Elkhart, IN 46515-0968.

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Latin American partners affirm joint pilgrimage

By David Vargas, Area Executive, Latin America & the Caribbean

94709-1212 37

For the first time in the history of the UCC/Disciples' ecumenical pilgrimage in Latin America and the Caribbean a formal consultation was held with the purpose of deepening dialogue, unity and solidarity between the two churches and five Pentecostal church partners in that region.

Forty participants gathered in Indianapolis for three days last fall to reflect on the theme "Sharing of Hope: An Ecumenism of the Spirit." Sponsored by the Global Ministries Latin America/Caribbean Office, delegates came from the Association Church of God of Argentina, the Pentecostal Church of Chile, the Christian Pentecostal Church of Cuba, the Christian Mission of Nicaragua and the Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela.

The encounter provided an opportunity to evaluate the Disciples/UCC/Pentecostal ecumenical pilgrimage of almost four decades which began when, in different moments, we met each other at the same crossroad in the dangerous route between Jericho and Jerusalem. . .as we faced together God's invitation to respond to the same assaulted human being, the same poverty, the same abuses, the same widows, the same disappeared people, the same victims of human rights violations. . .and the tremendous challenge of avoiding the temptation of ignoring the tragedy by "passing by on the other side."

Throughout the consultation participants had the opportunity to (1) reflect critically and constructively on the history and experience of the partnerships; (2) deepen relationships in an ecumenical context by facing the necessary challenges of an integral mission; (3) explore the possibility of establishing a permanent space where our respective churches are engaged in mission; and (4) facilitate and affirm projects geared toward transforming the cultures of despair which threaten the development of mutual respect, reciprocity in our worthiness, and transparency in every action that may nurture our integral growth.

We commited ourselves to become makers of hope, with a clear awareness of the multiple challenges to be faced as we enter the 21st century with a reaffirmation of our pledge of service to the churches in the North and the South.

Although the consultation was initially designed to address issues specifically related to the Global Ministries partnership with the five Pentecostal churches, it became very clear throughout the event that "living in the Spirit," "crossing frontiers," "tearing down barriers" and "making hope" are also challenges and imperatives we all encounter as we try to respond to God's call to mission through relationships with other church partners and ecumenical organizations in a region where 210 million people are living in poverty; a region with an increasing foreign debt and economic systems which perpetuate misery, distort people relations, and augment social inequalities; a region where we still hear the cry of those beaten on the road from Jericho to Jerusalem through whom Jesus, the Christ, continues to challenge the church to renew its commitment to sharing hope in search of a true ecumenism of the Spirit.

Denominations agree to form united church

Three Dutch Protestant denominations with a total membership of almost a fifth of Dutch citizens took a major step for unity by agreeing on a constitution and a name for a new united church.

The United Protestant Church in the Netherlands is the new name for the Netherlands Reformed, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Kingdom of the Netherlands.